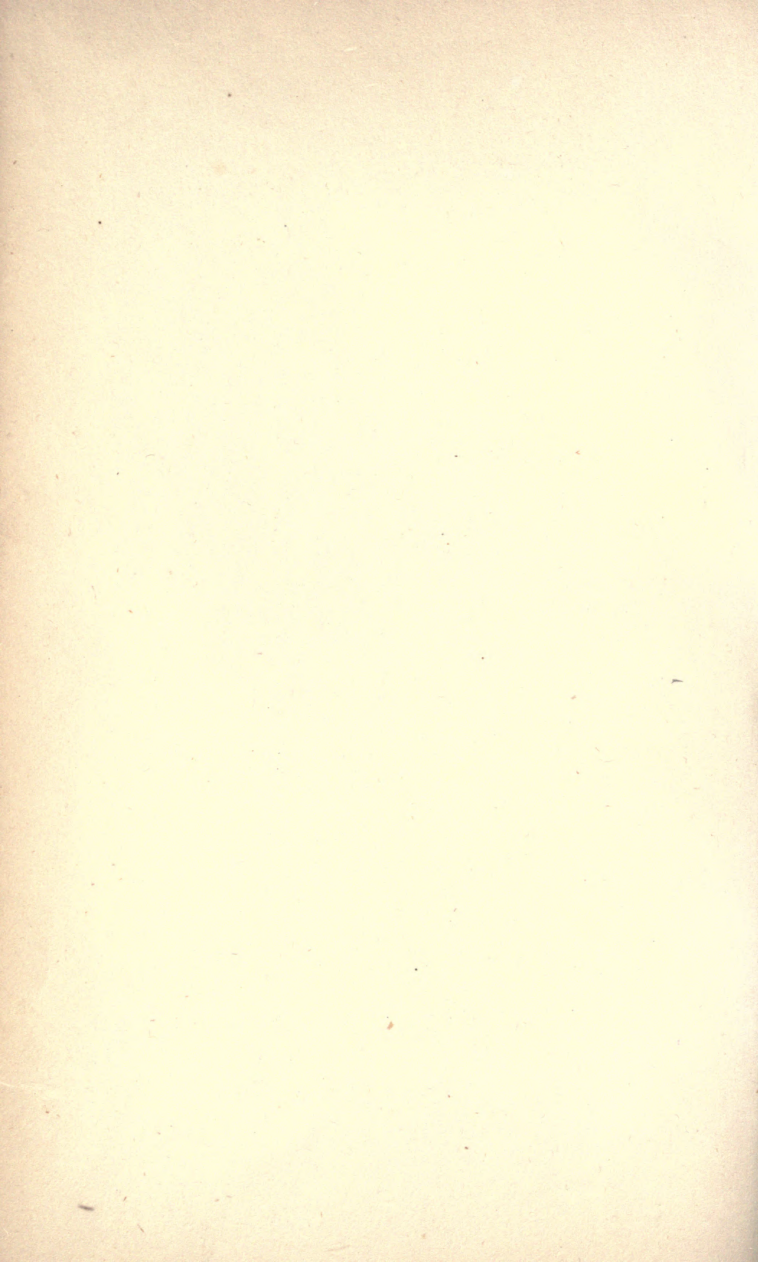


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A LECTURE,

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BY

DANIEL HOLSMAN,

AT THE REQUEST OF A COMMITTEE,

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MEXICO.

To ALL men, whether to the historian, the poet, or the romancer;—Mexico possesses great interest. To the historian, the chronicling of the great mutations of her fortunes furnishes a wide field, to the poet her mountains, her flowers, and her singing birds are suggestive of song, and to the romancer, Spain herself is not more rich in legends than Mexico. Every grand sullen old mountain, each little chapel whose bell tinkles in some beautiful vale, summoning its little flock of faithful to prayer, has its misty tale, and even the streets of the great cities share the honor. While the historian lingers over the fragmentary records of the Aztec Empire and speculates upon its departed greatness, and the scholar with eagerness scans the hieroglyphics upon the tombs at Xochimilco, and the poet dreams of the sombre sighing cypresses and the loves of Montezuma,

we the practicals of the present, looking for the incorporation of the territory with our own, gather with far greater interest those things which more immediately relate to her people and her resources.

Many have read the quaint truthful history of Bernal ^ZDiary, the chronicler of the conquest,—thousands have pored with delight over the fascinating pages of Prescott, but never since the time Cortez was banished from the land he had conquered for his master has Mexico had an adequate historian.

It is not my purpose to follow that arch filibuster, Cortez, and his five hundred men, nor to recount how he marched through now hostile, now friendly tribes; how, at one time, he was met by fierce foes with arrows and deadly lances; how, at another, he was greeted by joyous youths and dancing maidens bearing garlands in their hands, and decking his war steed with wreaths, and how, at last, he penetrated into the heart of the Aztec Empire, removed from his throne the luxurious but powerful monarch, and added to Spain her richest dependency, but simply to

relate those things which a short stay in that beautiful but unhappy country brought under my notice.

The origin of the Aztec Nation is involved in as much doubt to *us* as it was to *them*. They were not natives of the soil; their own legends and their high state of civilization amidst surrounding barbarism disprove that, but whence they came is a mystery which the lapse of three centuries has not served to unravel, and which, in all probability, no further flight of time will elucidate. As a Nation, they were highly intellectual, and virtuous far beyond those who considered themselves the heralds of the only true religion. They had an extensive knowledge of the arts, and paid much attention to architecture, which in itself denotes an advanced state of civilization. Their religious rites were in many particulars similar to those of the Christian church, the cross was the emblem of their religion, they observed a ceremony almost identical in form with that of the solemn communion, and baptised their infants with water, imploring the presiding goddess that the sin which was

given the child before the beginning of the world, might be washed away, and that it might live and be born anew. But that which we most wonder at and which we most admire, is their code of laws, which were duly registered and exhibited to the people by means of hieroglyphic paintings. The great offences against society, says Prescott, were all made capital. Prodigality, the removing of another's landmarks, and the failure to give a good account of a ward's property were alike punished by death. The laws with regard to intemperance were also of extreme severity: in the young it was visited with death, in the old by loss of rank and confiscation of property. The rite of marriage was celebrated with much formality, and divorces could alone be obtained after a hearing before the tribunal especially instituted for the purpose. The morality which pervaded the kingdom far exceeded that which marks the most enlightened nation of the present, their happiness was almost paradisiacal; but the prophecy that a stranger was to come who would reduce them to vassalage had to be fulfilled. The Spaniard came—the herald of civili-

zation and the only true religion—he found it prosperous and happy, he left it ruined and desolate—he found it a garden of virtues, he left it a wilderness of vice. It is needless for me to say more of the inhabitants of Anahuac. The story of their virtues and almost perfect happiness, the description of their sufferings and their wrongs, live in the fervid pages and poetic prose of Prescott.

The two great natural divisions of Mexico are those of climate, the *tierra caliente* and the *tierra templada*: the former embracing the gulf and Pacific coasts, and all those regions hot enough to produce the tropical fruits, and the latter comprising the high table lands. Just in the hottest part of the hot country, on the verge of a sandy desert, with the worst harbor on the coast, in fact, just the last place where you would imagine any one would have thought of locating a city, is situated the Commercial Emporium of the republic—Vera Cruz. The view of Vera Cruz from the sea is one of peculiarity. First are visible the domes and spires of the churches, rusted and black from age and vicinity to the

sea ; on the sides and rear stretches an arid plain reaching nearly back to a high mountain, which divides it from the valley of Jalapa ; in front, leaving a narrow and insecure roadstead, lies a low coral reef upon which stands the famous castle of San Juan de Ulloa. The town itself is small, containing not more than five or six thousand inhabitants, and encircled by a ditch and wall, which have served the purpose of keeping no enemy out that wanted to get in. Although the principal post of the republic on the gulf, the streets have a deserted appearance, with grass growing between the stones, and the unmolested buzzards their only scavengers.

It was in the beginning of March, in an incipient Norther, one of those gales which have proved so disastrous to many noble ships, that we entered the lonely roadstead of Vera Cruz ; strikingly was it in contrast with the lovely and romantic harbor we had just left. I have been up and down the New York Bay hundreds of times ; I know every village that stands upon the beautiful banks of Staten Island ; I have seen the light-house on Robins' Reef throwing its

lengthened shadow to the east and to the west ; but whether at sunrise or at sunset, or even when the light-house sheds a lustrous gleam upon the waters, it always has a charm and a charm of novelty. But here nothing than a roadstead of narrow breadth, on the one side a great fort, on the other a diminutive little town, along the shore a few wrecks, and in the stream protruding masts of great ships, which in fearful storms had perished at their anchors. The hot days, the scarcely cooler nights, the scorching winds from off the plains and the shadeless streets of Vera Cruz, are no inducements to the stranger to prolong his stay. If you are for the city of Mexico, or the interior, you leave in the afternoon by the diligencia, no peculiar vehicle indigenous to the country, but precisely similar to the hotel coaches of our large cities, and made by those enterprising individuals, Eaton and Gilbert, of Troy. After driving a half mile beyond the walls, you reach the railway station, where, instead of alighting and seating yourselves in sumptuous cars as it is with us, the horses are unhitched, the coach run upon the top of a little car, and with two poor

mules attached, which look more like animated hair trunks than beasts of burden, at about the speed of four miles an hour, attained by many blows and pokings of sharp pointed sticks, you are drawn over the most execrable road it is within the power of man to imagine, and without his power to describe. Just toward evening, you reach the terminus of the railway, and with eight mules attached, enter a country of great luxuriance. The dense chapparal on either side filled with a flower called the "Perfume of the Night," exhales a delicious odor and fills the air with fragrance. The startled deer that spring from the path and bound into the leafy recesses on either side, the frightened plover that rises and settles on a neighbouring limb, give testimony how little their haunts are visited by man. At last you begin crossing those rugged chains of mountains now rising seven and eight thousand feet, now sinking to the level of the sea, and which, with few intervening plateaus of narrow breadth, traverse this lower part of Mexico from the Gulf to the Pacific. Further on, you reach the National Bridge, one of the most magnificent pieces of

modern art in the republic, and Cerro Gordo, so brilliantly carried by the Americans in 1847.

By no means the least amusing sight in that land of oddities is the manner of driving, after having passed a fearful night in the inside of the coach, which had a motion not unlike the juvenile amusement of seesaw, and which had reduced two or three stove-pipe hats to a condition similar to those of gentlemen, "who never go home till morning," at sunrise, when near to Jalapa, I mounted the box that I might better view the approach to the most picturesque city in the republic, and whose name in connection with calomel is so familiar to all. We had two drivers, or cocheros as they are called, the one armed with a long lashed whip, the other with a sharp pointed pole and a basket of stones. I waited patiently for the attack which I was sure would be made as soon as we neared the city; at last commenced the onset—the one furiously belabored the sides of the poor mules with his long lashed whip, the other having exhausted the stones by pelting the leaders, in a paroxysm of frenzy seized the sharp pointed pole and began

boring into an unfortunate wheeler, and amid the crackings of the whip and hideous yells, we dashed into Jalapa with great eclat and much to the satisfaction of the cocheros.

The first view of Jalapa coming from Vera Cruz is sudden and sublime; nothing could be more instantaneous, save the touch of the magician's wand. In the bottom of the valley sleeps Jalapa, while the coffre of Perote, magnificent in its immensity, like the evil genius of the spot, watches in the rear. A little to the south beautiful Orizaba, mountain of the star, like a sugar loaf rises seventeen thousand feet from the level of its base, and ever pierces the clouds with its eternally snow-mantled summit. Still further to the southward stretch the barrancas (or defiles) leading to Coscomatepec and San Antonio Huatusco. With the lofty cordillera that shut it in, its groves of orange trees, its arborescent ferns and nodding palms, scarce can a lovelier spot be found than the valley of Jalapa. Situated just between the torrid and temperate zones, this region contains the products of both, the climate is the most delicious and healthful that can be

imagined, and during the prevalence of the Vomito is the resort of the merchants of Vera Cruz; it is also visited by invalids of all parts of the republic, and particularly by consumptives, on whom the climate is said to have a very beneficial effect. Here would I like to linger, but though I spent many happy days in the valley of Jalapa, and when I left it did so with regret, yet it has no grand cathedral resplendent with gold and precious stones, no ruined monuments, memorials of the obliterated race whose glories I might depict, nothing but its majestic scenery, and language cannot paint nature. Yet there is one scene more lovely than the rest, the description of which I cannot forego. Upon leaving Jalapa, we commenced the ascent of San Miguel, and when about three fourths of the distance up, the diligence stopped, that we might alight and behold what every traveller admits to be the most enchanting view on the North American continent. A little to the right was Jalapa, sleeping, as we had first beheld her, with the ogre Perote still watching her, below us were broad plateaus, deep ravines, and narrow gorges, away in the

distance the beautiful fall of Naulingen, leaping from a high black rock, seemed like a silver thread resting upon a sable mantle ; at the distance of a hundred miles we beheld the sea, sparkling beneath the rays of the sun ; and elevated as we were, thousands of feet above us towered the peak of Orizaba. Never will the impressions made upon me at the time by this magnificent panorama be erased. We all stood gazing at the scene as if rooted to the spot, until, after repeated calls of the driver, we reluctantly resumed our seats, and still ascending lost the view beneath the clouds. After gaining an altitude of eight thousand feet, you again descend and reach the insignificant village of Perote. Here commences the great Mal Pais. The plain stretching for many leagues on every side—barren, desolate, and much impregnated with salt,—in winter abundant in saline lakes, in summer swept by whirlwinds which carry the salty earth in columns far beyond the sight, is encircled with mountains white with saline encrustations. This waste, upon which nothing taller than a furze bush grows, is not without its beauties. In many places the

salt upon the earth appears almost like a hoar frost, and then the lofty cordillera that comes tumbling from the mountain regions of the north stops at the head of the plain—encircles it with its brawny arms—then reuniting continues on abrupt awhile, then sinks into gentle undulations in the lovely regions of the south. Across this sterile country, and beyond the dividing ridge, surrounded by a fruitful plain is the City of Puebla, second in size and importance in the republic. Behind the city rises the lofty summit of Popocatepetl, towering far above his fellow peaks. Of greater height above the level of the sea than Orizaba, its elevation from the plain is less, nor is it yet so beautifully proportioned, Orizaba, tall and slender, Popocatepetl is a huge mass and ill defined. The principal object of interest in the city is the cathedral, from the centre of which depends a massive chandelier of three tons in weight, composed of silver and gold; and the amount of jewels and precious stone displayed on State occasions almost equals that seen by Aladdin when he rubbed his magical lamp;

in fact its wealth is considered by many to be equal to that of the cathedral at Mexico.

To reach the Valley of Mexico you are compelled to cross another ridge of far greater height than those already surmounted between Puebla and the coast, rising indeed in one point to an altitude of eleven thousand feet. But the magnificent views from the lofty summits and the enchanting scenery in the mountains amply compensate for the fatigue.

At a point of the road called the Cruzdel Marquez, elevated ten thousand feet above the sea, and four thousand above the plain at its feet, the first full view of the plateau of Mexico, the lovely vale of Anahuac, bursts upon the sight with its silvery lakes, its fields of maize, its little hamlets and ruined cities, once so populous, and in the centre rising Chapultepec, the royal residence of the Montezumas, hard by the city of domes and turrets.—Mexico—the ancient Tenoctitlan. Beautiful as the valley still is, and so impressive to the traveller, what must it have been to the eyes of Cortez, before the forests of oaks had disappeared, when the lakes covered

three times the surface which they now do, and washed the walls of that far famed city "the Venice of the Aztecs." No longer do you approach the city by a narrow causeway, the lakes having retreated from the walls to the distance of a league, and the floating gardens with their loads of flowers have become fastened to the earth.

Although from the loveliness of its situation, the City of Mexico has been said to be the most beautiful on the American continent; yet architecturally, it can lay no claims to superior excellence, with the exception perhaps of some few of the public buildings, and even in these is displayed more of barbaric splendor than of refined elegance. The streets are laid out with extreme regularity, intersecting each other at right angles. The houses from the soft nature of the soil are but seldom more than one story in height, enclosing a quadrangle or courtyard from which the house is entered, and are of the style prevalent in the south of Europe during the 16th century. In the centre of the city is the grand plaza, an open space of several acres, fronting

which are the cathedral, the national palace, the Louja or Merchant's Exchange, and on the western side stands the palace built by Cortez, still owned by his descendants, and beneath whose spacious portals congregate crowds of hawkers, letter-writers, and dealers in trifling articles.

The city of Mexico might almost be called the city of churches, of which there are no less than eighty within the walls, and three of them, the Santa Teresa, the Encarnacion and the Concepcion, own three-fourths of all the private dwellings in the city. The church, always respected and sustained by the different dynasties that have ruled Mexico, has acquired great wealth and has not unfrequently been the lender of large sums to the government. The amount of property held by the Mexican Church at the present time, amounts to \$60,000,000, in mortmain; \$100,000,000, in lands and treasures, besides vast sums in jewels. To this great wealth, the Bishops and higher Clergy of the church have been faithful stewards, and although we cannot cease to regret the mistaken zeal of the first Bishop of Mexico, who

caused the destruction of the whole Aztec literature, yet the magnificent hospitals and charitable institutions which these men have erected, many of them out of their private revenues, will ever exist as monuments of their munificence. The three churches which are considered as surpassing in beauty, wealth, and importance, the others are the Cathedral, the Professa and the Collegiate Church of Guadeloupe. The Cathedral occupies precisely the same position as did the Teocalli or Pyramidal Temple of the Aztecs, and although nothing can compensate for its want of height, the interior is decorated with great gorgeousness, and profusion is its chief characteristic. Immediately fronting as you enter, and occupying the centre of the building, is a large enclosed choir for the Clergy, made of precious and highly polished woods, and glistening with gilded ornaments; directly in the rear, and about one hundred feet from the choir, is the Grand Altar, raised upon an elevated platform, and composed of thirteen different kinds of marble, covered with ornaments, crosses and candlesticks of gold and silver; it is surmounted by the Image of the

Virgin of Remedios, whose dowry in dresses, diamonds, emeralds and pearls is estimated at not less than \$3,000,000. From the choir to the altar, and encircling both, is a heavy balustrade made of a metal brought from China, and composed of copper, silver and gold. It is massive but not handsome, and being paid for by the weight in dollars, cost an enormous sum. The whole is lighted by numerous chandeliers of silver, and on Easter Sunday, when I was fortunate enough to see it, presents a gorgeous spectacle with its glistening gold and silver, and flaming wax lights glaring on the hundreds of kneeling worshippers who crowd into the spacious and magnificent edifice. In the outer and western wall of the Cathedral is fixed a circular stone, dug out from the plaza, covered with hieroglyphic figures, by which the Aztecs designated the months of the year, and forming a perpetual calendar. A little removed from the calendar is a second stone, which was used by the Aztecs in the great Temple in their human sacrifices; it is in a complete state of preservation, and the little canals for carrying off the blood, with a hollow in the middle,

into which the piece of jasper was inserted, upon which the back of the victim rested, while his breast was laid open and his palpitating heart submitted to the inspection of the high priest, still give one a living idea of the disgusting operation. The Church of the Professor is considered to be the wealthiest next to the cathedral and collegiate church, and is chiefly noted for its large collection of paintings.

About a league to the north of the city, and reached by an avenue extending over one of the ancient causeways, is the church of Guadeloupe, at the spot where was made the treaty between Mexico and the United States, called the treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo. As Saint Patrick is the tutelar saint of Ireland, so is the Virgin of Guadeloupe the Patroness of Mexico, and in every Church, Convent, Monastery, Palace, Hovel, Hacienda and Rancho, on the wall is suspended an Image of the Virgin of Guadeloupe. The accumulation of treasure within the church, surpasses all others save the cathedral; like the Cathedral, it has an enclosed choir for the Clergy, and the altar is also similar, with the exception

that the candlesticks, the shields and other ornaments are entirely of gold, and the railing which encloses both choir and altar is of solid silver. The numerous chapels with which the edifice is surrounded, and which have been built by its wealthy votaries, have destroyed any architectural effect which it may have had, and one of these is remarkable from its having been built in consequence of an escape from shipwreck, and having assumed as much as possible the shape of the sails of a ship. Near by is also a medicinal spring upon the spot where it is said the virgin first appeared, and is attributed to possess great healing qualities, and continually around it are seen crowds of Indians who come from long distances to participate in its benefits. The power which the Church wields over this portion of her blind and devoted followers is accounted for by the fact, that though with difficulty won from idolatry, they love to blend the superstitions of their former worship with the rites of the Romish Church.

It is a very pretty sight if one likes to behold the costumes of the different races, to ride out

before sunset on the Paseo de la Viga, the fashionable promenade that runs by the side of the canal of Chalco, and watch the natives as they paddle their canoes freighted with fruits, flowers, and vegetables, which morning and evening they take to the Mexican market, bringing them from what once were the Chinampas, or floating gardens. It is said there are over twenty thousand private carriages in the city of Mexico, for scarcely any lady ever walks in the street, and here, too, in the afternoon, on this avenue of la Viga, in their elegant coaches, pour forth the beauty and fashion of the metropolis, and the men splendidly mounted, standing by the wayside, they scatter in their hearts the seeds of love and hope. But at sunset the bell tolls for prayer, the moving mass for a moment pauses, the Indian paddling his canoe falls upon his knees, each hat is lifted from the head in reverential devotion, and then each betakes himself to the city. Whatever evils may exist in Catholic countries, we cannot but admire the regard of the people for the customs of the Church, and their devotion to their religion.

Going along the Paseo Nueva, the grand avenue of the capital, and at the commencement of which stands the famous equestrian statue of Carlo Cuatro, and passing out of the Garita de Belen, through which the American army under Quitman entered the city, and driving about a mile and a half along the aqueduct, you reach Chapultepec, a low mount, on which stands the military academy, and where was fought the celebrated battle just before the capture of the city. Here was the favorite residence of that luxurious monarch, Montezuma the Second; here he reclined beneath the very cypress trees which, "grey with the moss of ages," now exist, and which even then were centuries old. Never under any preceding ruler had the empire attained such magnificence; but while it seemed in its palmiest and most prosperous state, the canker had eaten deepest in its heart. Under the shades of the cypress trees, near his beloved Chapultepec, by the side of his kingly ancestors, still rest his ashes.

No country in the world is so rich in the precious metals as Mexico; between four and five

thousand mines have been at different times worked, and up to 1821, the year of Independence, \$2,028,000,000 had been obtained from them. The most valuable of these are now in the hands of English capitalists, who, however, until within the last few years, have been exceedingly unfortunate in their management of them. In 1824 and 1825 the most extravagant notions prevailed throughout England with regard to the wealth of the Mexican mines. The most exaggerated stories were seized with avidity by those even usually incredulous, and Joint Stock Companies and United Mexican Associations were formed, almost rivalling in wildness of project the famous South Sea bubble. Three centuries of experience in the successful working of these mines by the natives, was thrown aside as useless, Cornwall was stripped of her miners, machinery of the most expensive sort was manufactured, and to superintend these were sent out gentlemen of much theory but little practice. The result was, that the machinery was not at all adapted to the purposes, the labor of the Cornish miners three times as expensive as a like number of natives,

and together with the incompetency and extravagance of the superintendents, resulted in bankruptcy to the associations; and it was not until 1835, when, detecting the errors which had proved so disastrous to the first speculators, that they were resuscitated, and by prudent and judicious management, made lucrative to the shareholders. A description of a visit to one of the most successful of these mines, together with the mode of extracting the silver from the ore, I have thought would not be uninteresting.

Deep hid in a valley between two chains of mountains in the great Cordilleras, shut out from all the world beside, with the primeval forest climbing the steep ascent on either side, lies the village of Real del Monte. And when from the bridle path which crosses the mountains, you look down upon the sombre little hamlet with its solitary church and scattered houses, it almost passes belief that beneath it lies one of the richest mines in the world, which, long before the conquest the Aztecs worked, from which vast portions of their wealth were exhumed, and which even now, after the workings of so many years, seems inexhaus-

tible. Having resolved upon visiting the mine, we laid aside our clothes and donned the miner's suit, consisting of heavy flannel trowsers and shirt, thick boots and a lighted tallow candle secured by a lump of damp clay to our hard hats. At the entrance to the main shaft is stationed the great steam pump used to free the mine of water, the greatest obstacle which is met with. The pumping rods, or beams, as they might be better called, are two in number, one of a thousand and another of twelve hundred feet in length; they lift the water six hundred feet to the mouth of an adit or tunnel, which runs for the distance of two miles under ground, and discharges 100,000 gallons per hour, making quite a river and sufficient to turn the wheels of a mill seven miles distant. A trap door being lifted, we began to descend by small ladders of about nine inches in width and about three feet long, reaching to a small platform, where started a similar ladder at an opposite angle. After reaching the bottom of the mine, two thousand feet below the surface, we passed into the lateral galleries, which, sometimes, not more than four feet in height and three

in breadth, we would be compelled almost to creep through on our hands and feet, and at others expanding into magnificent grottos, where the stalactites and many colored crystals flashing from the miners' torches, gave the impression of a necromancer's fit abode. The ore, when brought to the surface, is in masses of about one foot square ; it is there broken into small pieces, packed in bags, placed on the backs of donkeys and driven fifteen miles to the Hacienda or refining mill of the company, at Regla. It is there subjected to the operation of the stamping mill, which pulverizes it by means of heavy pounders ; then mixed with water it runs into large vats, where it remains until the water is completely evaporated, when it is taken out, mixed with a proportion of five per cent. of salt and a small part of sulphuric acid, and put into a calcinating furnace ; the muriatic acid amalgamates with the silver forming muriate of silver, and the sulphuric acid with the base of the salt, forming sulphate of soda. After having assumed these conditions, the mass is put into barrels revolving upon their axes, with quicksilver and scraps of

iron; the muriatic acid then abandons the silver for the iron, and the mercury gathers up all the silver; it is then placed in a leathern bag with a cloth bottom, which permits the superfluous quicksilver to pass off. In this state it is of a dull leaden color and of the consistency of thick paste. The next and last process which it undergoes, is being formed into wedge shapes and placed around the inside of a dome four feet high, about which a fire is made, driving the mercury off in fumes and leaving the silver in a perfectly pure state. There are two or three other methods of extracting and refining silver, but this is considered the best by far.

With every variety of climate, and with a soil which almost spontaneously produces the fruits for man's subsistence, in great variety, and exceeding perfection, her agriculture is by no means developed. Bad roads, and the want of transportation, except by mules, combine to impede rural industry, destroy internal intercourse, and force the consumption of products upon the spot on which they are raised. The principal and staple crops are corn, rice, the banana, beans and sugar.

There are but few parts of Mexico in which corn is not cultivated with great success, and reduced to a pulpy consistency by rubbing between two stones, mixed with a little lime and baked in the thinnest imaginable cakes, it constitutes an important item in the meal of every Mexican, from the millionaire to the most wretched lepero. The Banana, to the inhabitants of the Tierra Caliente, is almost as great a necessity as corn; and Humboldt, that model of accuracy in all historical and statistical facts, says, that while an acre of wheat will only sustain three men, an acre of bananas will sustain fifty. But that in which the most energy is displayed, and the most capital employed, is the culture of the sugar cane. One of the most celebrated plantations, or Haciendas, that of Temisco, in the valley of Cuernavaca, is thirty miles long by nine in breadth, and cost the present owner \$300,000. This estate, by no means the largest in the republic, produces yearly eight hundred thousand pounds of sugar, and pays in wages alone a thousand dollars a week. And yet, with crops which produce twice a year, and with every pos-

sible natural advantage, Mexico is not an agricultural country. The monopoly of the land by a few owners, the territories of which not unfrequently comprise from twenty to one hundred square leagues; the rigid adherence to the primitive principles of agriculture; the reluctance to adopt modern implements; the want of immigration, and, above all, of roads between different parts of the republic, serve to make it pastoral rather than agricultural; and it will not be until these large manors are subdivided, immigration encouraged, means of intercourse between the interior and the coast promoted, and not until she exports the products which her fertile soil so readily produces, that Mexico can take that position, the expectation of which her natural resources so amply justifies.

Every nation has its national beverage: the French, the wines of Bordeaux; the English, ale; the German, lager; the Irish, the *Mountain Dew*, gathered from the *Mountain Still*; and the Mexican, Pulque. Pulque is an exhilarating and slightly intoxicating liquor, made from the juice of the Maguey, or, as it is better known to us,

the century plant. Much capital is employed and large plantations devoted to its culture in the states of Puebla, Mexico, Guanajuato and Valladolid, and constitutes a considerable portion of the domestic commerce. Just as the plant is about to bloom, which is generally when it has attained its fifth year, the heart is cut out, leaving a large cavity in which the juice collects, and being emptied three or four times daily, is allowed slightly to ferment, then placed in cases made of new hog skins, which, placed on the backs of diminutive donkeys, are driven beneath the burning sun of the Tierra Caliente to one of the great cities. The baking process which the skin undergoes during this journey, imparts to it that peculiar flavor which contributes to make it, as Mad. Calderon so aptly says, "taste like putrid meat smells." But notwithstanding the abusive things said of it, when one is crossing a broad arid plain where no water is, and where at every step the horse sinks to his fetlock in the loose shifting sand, and the ardent rays of the sun fever the blood and parch the mouth, the sight of a palqueria is hailed with delight, and the pecu-

liar taste of the liquor is forgotten in its refreshing and exhilarating effects.

There are three distinct races in Mexico—the White, the Indian, and the Negro. The last notwithstanding the large numbers brought hither into slavery have been almost exterminated by disease, and now amount only to about five thousand. The total population is somewhat over seven millions, of which but one million are Whites and Creoles or natives, the remaining six millions being Indians and Mestizoes or mixed. The principal seat of the Whites is on the table land and along the northern frontier. The White, from the climate and from the pride of color which makes him regard labor as something degrading, is disposed to an indulgent and voluptuous life; if asked a question which demands reflection, too lazy to think, his answer is “quien sabe,” or who can tell; and procrastinating beyond all example everything is put off “Hasta manana,” which means until to-morrow. Living upon an estate secluded from all society, but rarely hearing of the movements in the world, and with no taste for literature, he becomes sel-

fish and morose ; or an inhabitant of the city, he is occupied with the weekly revolutions and changes of government. Entirely unfitted for social and domestic life, his amusements are the opera and the bull fight, his affections his horse and the gambling table. Perfidious, he prates of his honor, cowardly he boasts of his valor, and unscrupulous in his efforts for power he descants on his patriotism. But of that other portion—the great mass, says a late writer—the Indians of Mexico, are grave, taciturn and distrustful, types in manners, of a crushed and conquered race, and although slavery is prohibited by law, yet on the plantations they are in reality slaves. With strong attachments for the place of his birth, the greatest punishment the planter can inflict on the Indian, is to expel him from his estate, and then at intervals indulging in the wildest and most extravagant dissipation he becomes a debtor to the proprietor which the landholder in every manner helps to promote, until at last he becomes mortgaged to the estate for life, and this is the origin of peonage which is but another form of slavery.

“The worst punishment,” said Bataller, “that can be inflicted upon Mexicans, is to permit them to govern themselves.” Thirty-five years of almost uninterrupted civil war have proved the truth of that remark. Throned on mines she is a borrower at exorbitant usury. Washed by the two great oceans of the globe, her mariners are fishermen and her vessels are skiffs. Endowed with a constitution, and enjoying the name of a republic, she beholds that constitution overthrown by her army, without even demanding the consent of her people. Incapable of developing her great resources, she must instead of progressing, retrograde. Mr. Ward, British Minister to Mexico, speaking of California in 1827, says “centuries must elapse before the civilization of America can increase sufficiently to give it any value, and it will probably be one of the last strong holds of man in a semi-barbarous state,” and had this territory not passed into the hands of an enlightened and enterprising nation, the rivers still would have rolled undisturbed over their golden beds, and the mountains still have concealed their treasures. Impoverished, haughty,

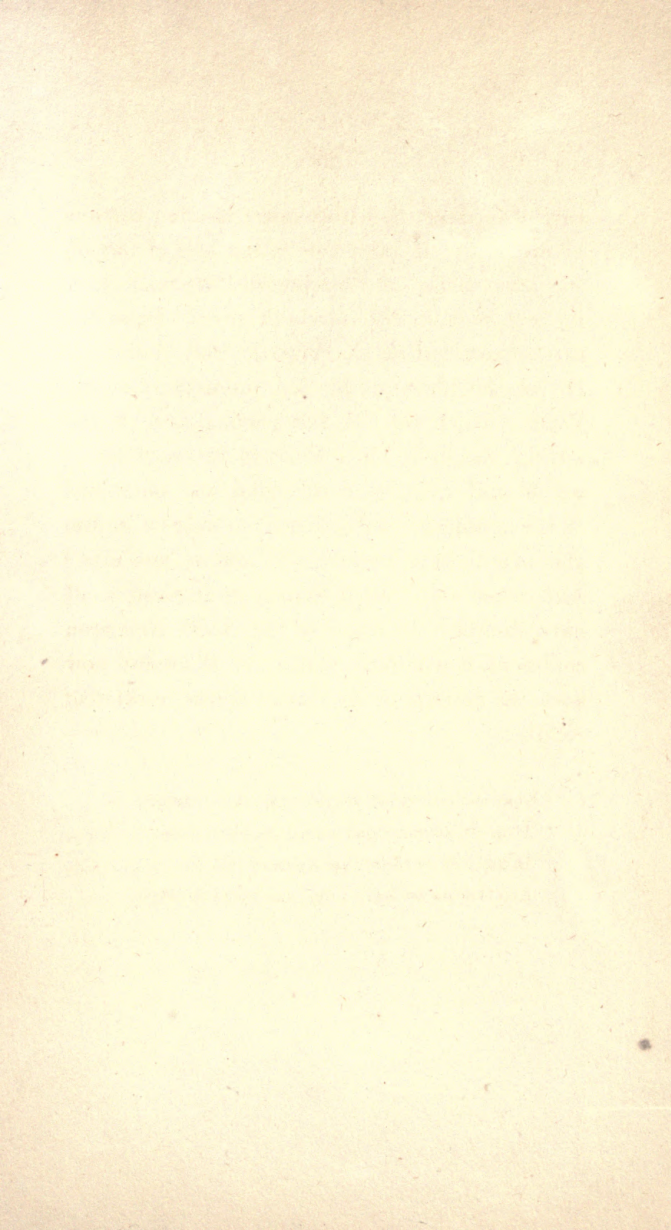
uneducated, defiant, bigoted, loaded with debt, without credit and occupying a geographical position by which from the laws of nature she ought to have a controlling effect in the affairs of the world, it is impossible for her longer to exist an independent nation, and as the United States could not permit any European government to acquire new territory on this continent, she must be annexed to this country. A distinguished authority says, [“]that when a weak power owns an adjoining territory to the stronger power, which in the position of a third might become dangerous, the strong party has the right to demand it by purchase, which if refused it has the right to take it by force.” This doctrine the English government have recently put in force with regard to the kingdom of **O**ude in the East Indies, and although in the event of a war a communication with California by the way of Vera Cruz and San Blas would be of the utmost importance, it will not be necessary to assert a doctrine which is so repugnant to our institutions and to the genius of our people, for like a ripened pear she will soon fall into our arms, and already a few patriot statesmen in

Mexico, assert that her only hope is in annexation to the United States.

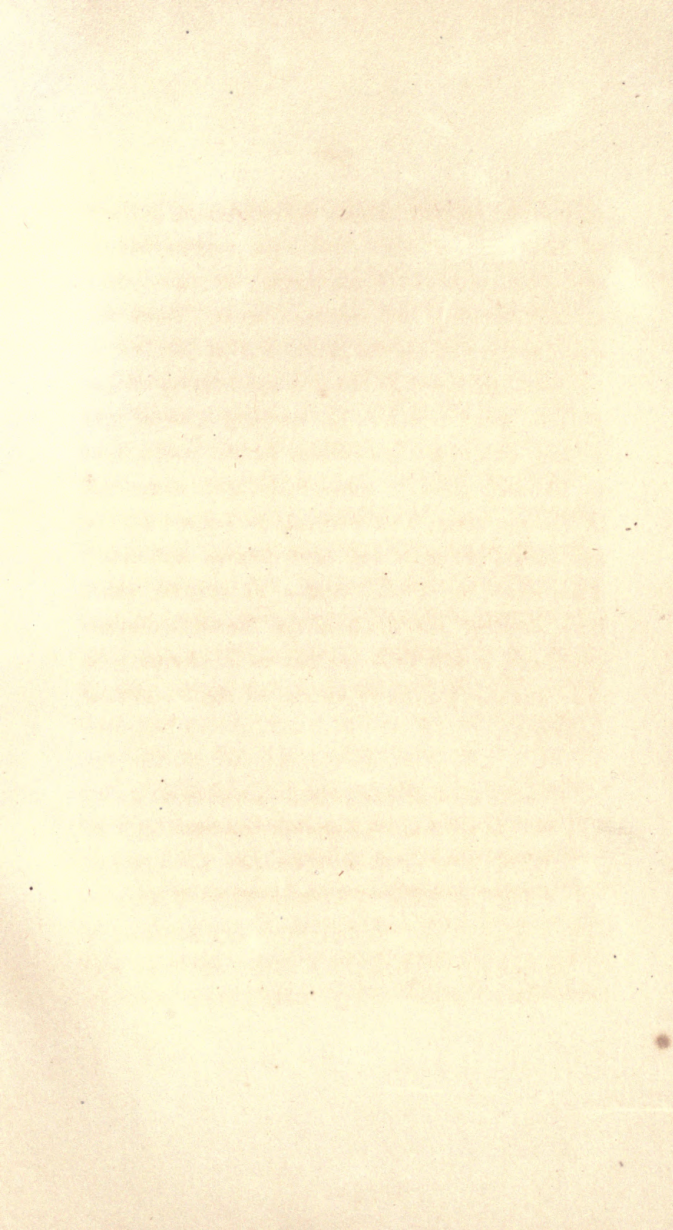
Extension of territory in such a country as ours, and with such a people, is not prejudicial to its existence. When distinct nationalities are absorbed by an empire, retaining the same population, influenced by the same interests, and changing but in their rulers, their acquisition tends only to weaken and divide; but in the acquirement of foreign territory by the United States, its population cease to have an individuality, their language, the people themselves disappear before the mighty influx of Americans, and the tie of kindred and community of interest firmly bind the whole together. And I believe that the Creator has designed this nation to be the herald of civilization, of liberty and christianity to the oppressed of the earth, and that it will lure the world to freedom by the beauty of its example. And speaking of the expansion of this country, a gentleman distinguished as much for his classic acquirements as his profound statesmanship, says "It must reach at the north to the enchanted

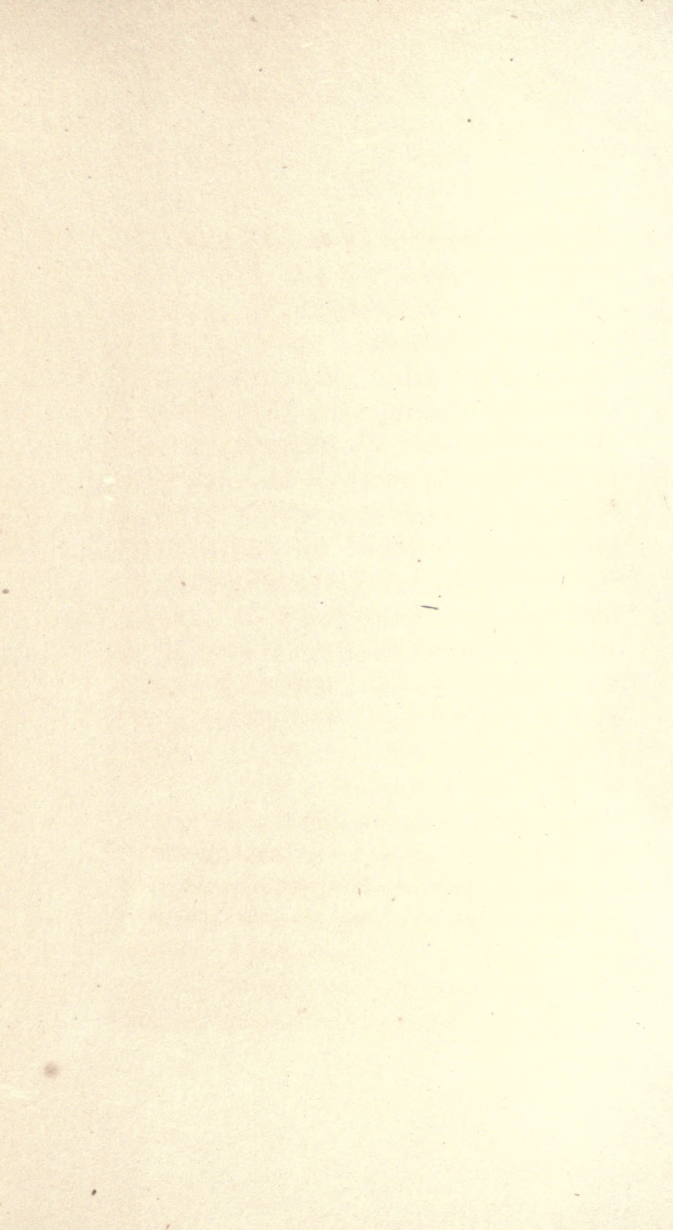
cave of the magnet, within never melting barriers of arctic ice ; it must bow to the lord of day on the altar peaks of Chimborazo ; it must look up and worship the southern cross. From the easternmost cliff on the Atlantic, that blushes in the kindling dawn, to the last promontory on the Pacific, which catches the parting kiss of the setting sun as he goes down to his pavilion of purple and gold, it must make the outgoings of the morning ; and evening to rejoice in the gladsome light of morals, and letters, and arts." And when the United States, as it must, shall have absorbed the whole of the North American continent, it will fully realize, as it almost now does, the description by Homer of the buckler of Achilles:

" Now the broad shield complete the artist crowned,
With his last hand, and poured the ocean round.
In living silver seemed the waves to roll,
And beat the buckler's verge, and bound the whole.'













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